

Appl. No. 09/778,371
Amdt. Dated Oct. 16, 2003
Reply to Office Action of July 16, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) An absorbent article comprising:

- (1) a backsheet;
- (2) a liquid pervious topsheet joined to the backsheet;
- (3) an absorbent core disposed intermediate to the topsheet and the backsheet; and
- (4) a thermal cell actuator which adds or removes heat from at least a portion of the absorbent article upon actuation so as to result in a useful function selected from the group consisting of:
 - a) maintaining the article at a predefined temperature,
 - b) maintaining relative humidity in a volume between a wearer and the article when the article is worn
 - c) melting a material disposed on the article,
 - d) changing a mechanical property of a different component of the article,
 - e) changing the breathability of a component of the article, and
 - f) changing the vapor pressure of a material disposed on the article.

2. (Previously Presented) An absorbent article comprising:

- (1) a backsheet;
- (2) a liquid pervious topsheet joined to the backsheet;
- (3) an absorbent core disposed intermediate to the topsheet and the backsheet;
- (4) a thermal cell actuator which adds or removes heat from at least a portion of the absorbent article upon actuation so as to result in a useful function selected from the group consisting of:
 - a) maintaining the article at a predefined temperature,
 - b) maintaining relative humidity in a volume between a wearer and the article when the article is worn
 - c) melting a material disposed on the article,
 - d) changing a mechanical property of a different component of the article,

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- e) changing the breathability of a component of the article, and
- f) changing the vapor pressure of a material disposed on the article; and
- (5) a triggering mechanism connected with the thermal cell actuator whereby a non-urine based signal within the article causes the thermal cell actuator to add or remove heat from at least a portion of the absorbent article.

3. (Previously Presented) An absorbent article comprising:

- (1) a backsheet;
- (2) a liquid pervious topsheet joined to the backsheet;
- (3) an absorbent core disposed intermediate to the topsheet and the backsheet; and
- (4) an electrically powered thermal cell actuator which adds or removes heat from at least a portion of the absorbent article upon actuation so as to result in a useful function selected from the group consisting of:
 - a) maintaining the article at a predefined temperature,
 - b) maintaining relative humidity in a volume between a wearer and the article when the article is worn
 - c) melting a material disposed on the article,
 - d) changing a mechanical property of a different component of the article,
 - e) changing the breathability of a component of the article, and
 - f) changing the vapor pressure of a material disposed on the article.

4. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator performs the function ~~is performed~~ at a location between the backsheet of the article and the skin of the wearer in response to a change in relative humidity, moisture, or temperature.

5. (Currently Amended) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator performs the function in response to the application of a tensile force by a caregiver to extend a portion of the article a garment body, or in response to the application of a normal force to compress a portion of the article garment body by a caregiver.

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6. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the action of the caregiver is an application of a tensile force to peel a tab exposing an opening in the thermal cell actuator which allows for the activation of said actuator.
7. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator controls humidity or temperature in the article.
8. (Cancelled)
9. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator includes a material that performs an exothermic or endothermic reaction.
10. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 9 wherein the thermal cell actuator performs an endothermic reaction using a reactant selected from the group: $\text{Na}_2\text{HPO}_4 \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3 \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$, NH_4NO_3 , KCl , NH_4Cl , KNO_3 , NaNO_3 , KCNS , NH_4CNS , Urea, $\text{NaCH}_3\text{COO} \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$.
11. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator includes a Peltier cell.
12. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 1 comprising a thermal cell actuator that provides a constant temperature in a region of the article during use of the article of about 15° to about 25° Celsius.
13. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein the thermal cell actuator is not in contact with the wearer's skin when the article is worn.
14. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein the thermal cell actuator is in vapor communication with the wearer's skin such that vapor can condensate inside the article.
15. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein the thermal cell actuator is triggered by a user during application of the article.
16. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 12 wherein the constant temperature in the region is maintained for at least 1 hour.
17. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 1 wherein the thermal cell actuator changes a mechanical property of a different component of the article.

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18. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 17 whercin the component of the article is a waist opening or a cuff opening.
19. (Previously Presented) The absorbent article of claim 1 whercin activation of the thermal cell actuator results in a change in the vapor pressure of a material disposed on the article.
20. (Original) The absorbent article of claim 19 wherein the thermal cell actuator provides at least a portion of the article with a temperature of less than about 25° Celsius.